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The lack of national concern for the well-being of the black race has produced the young black militants to whom US society is reacting today. They represent the children who were promised equal educational opportunity in 1954 and are aware that only token efforts have been made since that time to effectively desegregate schools. An alliance of black and white leadership is needed to take a positive view of black militancy. Universities and school systems should find ways of involving the most resourceful of the dissident blacks where talent and drive are needed. Every school of education should prepare its own Green Beret squads and curriculum specialists, and acquaint teachers with the mode of life of disadvantaged youth. While militant chants and slogans continue in a raging ideological battle, high school students should be sorted for training at integrated universities, and the efforts of Negro colleges should be nurtured and supported to move 150,000 young people toward fruitful careers. The ideologues will have to revise their positions if the facts are changing all of the time. Such leadership would help to change the country's hostile mood to one of mutual respect between the races, in which black ethnocentricity does not exclude full participation in the country's social, economic, political and cultural structure. The new black identity would thrive and at the same time the notion of a common national destiny for all people would be preserved. (WM)

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Analyst's Paper for
Discussion Group X
Wednesday
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Group X: The College and the Urban Community

RACIAL INSULARITY AND THE NATIONAL PURPOSE

By

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The logical and moral conclusion that should follow from our national heritage of the Judeo-Christian ethic, the Constitution and 350 years of national, bi-racial experience is that the black and white community in America--in the South--should by now effectuate a just and compatible rapprochement. At this point in history, only the most spurious anthropology, the most anarchistic social philosophy or the most eccentric racial chauvinism could lead to any other conclusion. Our destinies, social, cultural, economic and political, are inexorably bound together on this patch of real estate unless we pursue an irrational, illegal and immoral course that would lead to an intransigent estrangement between our people.

For example, an economic program that would keep blacks poor will operate detrimentally against us all; a fascist, racist national policy would jeopardize the freedom of all in its implementation; a violation of law and order in high places will lead to a concomitant disrespect for law and order among the masses. We would all stand to lose.

Thus, in spite of the difficulties and the potential human failure, a society that blends the interests of all with justice and mutual respect is the only decent objective we have, on either moral, legal or pragmatic grounds.

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And, since 1954, there have been many of us naive enough or hopeful enough to believe that this was the goal towards which we were moving. We held this hope sanguinely despite occasional set-backs and despite the sluggish pace of social change. We saw in this goal four potential developments.

1. We saw in public school integration the end of a dual system with dual standards. We thought that by 1968 surely one full generation of black children--with 12 years of schooling added to 1954--would have coursed their way through the public schools with only their innate capacities setting limits on their level of academic attainment. We saw them entering schools that would assume nothing permanent and immutable about their sub-cultural limitations and induct them into the main stream of Americana. We saw them starting on even footing with every other child and finding the stimulation that would offset those economic and social vestiges of the legacy of racial inequality.

2. Furthermore, our high vision in the mid-fifties led us to believe that the integration of schools would provide youngsters with sufficient contact beyond the wall of color to reduce the fact of color to an incidental aspect of humanity like fatness, freckles or flat feet and, hence, signifying nothing ipso facto regarding mental ability, character or other intangible attributes.

3. We saw this as the beginning of the end of discrimination in housing and jobs as a derivative of the leveling off of educational opportunity and social equality.

4. And, fourthly, we looked forward to black ethnocentricity becoming no less of a social and economic impediment than the Catholic or Jewish faith or Polish and Norwegian ancestry. We saw social class as being eventually the result of one's own capacity, income and taste rather than a correlation with one's pigmentation, hair texture and physiognomy.

But, such hopes proved to be forlorn. Our optimism about social change was dulled successively by legal circumvention, the resurgence of the ultra-Right with heavy financing, a cautious national administration for eight years, and the general atavistic drag on human nature that begrudges the sharing of advantages.

We saw changes take place in peripheral aspects of national experience, gestures that were dramatic but that really fell far short of fundamental change. Twenty thousand students in an Upward Bound program is a far cry from a half-million black dropouts. A few televised black athletes on display on Saturday

and Sunday does not affect the underemployed, unskilled, uneducated masses in the cities centers.

It is very dishonest for anyone to say conclusively that the Poverty Program failed, because it was never really tried on a sustained basis. It faced the trauma of local political impediments and the uncertainty of Federal funding for every month of its life. Who can call that an honest try? That's not the way we fought World War II! That's not the way we're going to get to the moon. And that's not the way to lift the black bottom in this society to a viable community of self-sustaining citizens.

While these gestures have gone on since 1954, there has been an increase of migration to the urban North by 50% and the resultant cramming of the cities slums. There has been the parallel flight to the suburbs by the whites and their abandonment of city schools. There has been the deterioration of urban conditions in every way and the fostering of hostility almost always occasioned by encounters with police who were alien to the new black masses in the cities. There has been the generation of a rapidly growing, young, black militancy in response to the futility of life in these urban ghettos.

The moral earnestness of the militants' cause, despite the overtones of violence, has fragmented black leadership, has dramatized the plight of urban blacks, has polarized the nation politically and snatched the covers off everyone in the safe center. Nothing was higher on the national agenda in the early sixties than the problem of containing young black militancy and the surge of awareness that it inspired.

The question before us today is this: Can we salvage the hope of a national cultural pluralism that will allow this new black identity to thrive and at the same time preserve the notion of a common national destiny for all our people?

A. Come now and let us consider that the answer cannot be found in a temporizing response to a single crisis or a series of crises. The answer will require the leadership, black and white, to take high ground and view this in the broadest possible perspective. The alternative to a common national destiny is only a more cruel and a more destructive dualism than the one we thought we were leaving in 1954. The passive, accommodationist Negro of 1954 is now supplanted by a better informed, politically astute and psychologically uninhibited young black whose boldness is matched by his contempt for presumed white superiority.

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There is a way of looking at this that paralyzes us with fear and that stifles every constructive movement. But unless we take a positive view of this militancy, our responses will be unintelligent and futile.

Let the catharsis take place! Let the chants and the slogans continue. Let the new styles in dress and medallions do for these youngsters what guitars, long hair and short skirts do for others. This does not mean a hopeless dualism, for while the catharsis goes on, we should be sorting out of every high school class as many as we can find who can be taught quadratic equations, clinical psychology and oceanography, hustling them through our great universities and sending them forth to prove that the system is changing. We should be standing close to our predominantly Negro colleges, encouraging their support and nurturing their efforts to move 150,000 young people toward fruitful careers.

Every school of education should be preparing its own Green Beret squads, crack curriculum specialists, teachers rehearsed in the mode of life in the world of disadvantaged children, moving them semester after semester into integrated schools with integrated faculties, getting little children ready to live in a world that will leap into history as soon as we exhaust the present convulsions. We must think affirmatively, act affirmatively, and expect affirmative results. And to our great surprise, every year we will have a new set of facts to deal with, a new synthesis possible because of a new set of theses to put beside the on-going antitheses. We must deliberately create our own novelties in history and catalyze progress rather than continue to react to novelties that sneak upon us inadvertently.

While the ideological battles rage, we should be at work. And the ideologues will have to look around and revise their positions if the facts are changing all of the time and novel situations have to be reckoned with. A surge of concern for educational achievement for the rural South would be novel!

The young black militant is reacting to an America that denied black humanity; that frustrated black progress, that demeaned black identity; that bought off black initiative; that intimidated black voices. Our reaction now should be to get busy and affirm the black presence, prepare black technicians, support black leaders, employ black professionals and release the real black power that gets perverted as it strains for expression in the thick city centers. Moreover, this thickening of the black city center means the crystallizing of a subculture of the ghetto, with more and more black children getting

less and less education and falling farther and farther behind. These educational deficits are depriving them of the full benefit of what would appear to be a new openness toward equal opportunity in higher education. It is a hard fact to face, but it means also a hardening of a core of alienated young blacks, the response to whom will call forth the utmost in courage, intelligence and honesty on the part of all those in leadership positions.

Another alternative to a common national destiny, reasserted with imagination in word and in deed, will be a similar and escalating hardening of white attitudes on race. It does not take much to cause liberals to abandon a lukewarm commitment to change. One's own interest is so close to him that he can embrace another's only in the most convenient of circumstances. And if the young black militant with his Afro "habitué" appears with his demands and strong language, this is all it takes to drive the timid to flight. And this flight is to a comfortable refuge in the center of a waiting indifference to black advance.

The logical extremity of this argument is that the black militant has no one left to listen to him but those who have been exiled from the polite, middle class center. These are the white Left, those who for their own reasons have likewise resigned from the mainstream of American life.

Thus the young black militant is constantly tempted to make common cause with the Left and to abandon all hope that America will alter its posture toward black aspirations.

The alliance of the black militants with the Left is always a possibility because both are in contempt for what is called the "System." The difference is, however, that the Left are benefiting from the "System"; they are parasites upon it, they appropriate its benefits, they were educated by its good schools, and are inevitably its heirs. They can afford an excursion from it and return to it merely by shaving and putting on socks and ties. It is easy to reject that which you have known and to which you can return at will.

But the militant blacks have turned against the System because it has been out of their reach. They have only seen it function from the outside. It would do all of us good, therefore, for young blacks to be trained and employed at the management level, at the policy-making center of things. They would bring fresh insight into the assessment of the nation's needs and priorities. They would not be grafted onto government or business or education--like "Toms" uncritically. They would bring to the inside a new wisdom and a new view of society that would be mutually helpful.

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Thus, instead of universities and school systems standing and wringing their hands, or rushing around passing resolutions on how to handle black dissidents, we need to get ahead of the issue and find ways of involving the most resourceful of the dissident blacks where talent and drive are needed.

Granted, time is against us. In so many places, the die is already cast, the battle lines are drawn and an adamant stance has been taken. But work is still the best answer to worry, and all we can do is to continue to work to make the cause of the total society the cause of the young black, to help him to fulfill his interests by working for the interests of us all. Give him a piece of the action!

In how many important places in your establishment does a black person hold a job of consequence? If a young black had to look to your institution for some clue on what America held out to him, what would his conclusion be?

The alternative is a cruel and destructive dualism that will solidify the black sub-culture versus the country.

B. The next alternative to the bold assertion of a common national destiny with justice and equality is the <u>official</u> re-sanctioning of racism in American life. We cannot forget how the Emancipation was virtually vetoed by the 1876 Hayes-Tilden presidential election. The deal made in the Wormley House in Washington that settled that election sealed the doom of black people for 75 years. And right behind that came the 1896 Plessy-Furguson Decision sanctifying racial inferiority on the part of the blacks.

What starts out as a national mood soon congeals into national policy. And the mood today is toward a reversion to black containment.

In the cities, the police are stiffening. The last election revolved around law and order, a euphemism for stifling black militancy. The real estate and the demographic boundaries in the metro areas clearly reveal a pattern of containment, not inclusion.

When the black militants respond to this in their own way, the majority community finds in their response a rationale for further recalcitrance. Racism, then, that once fell before the legal and scientific pressures is revived on pragmatic grounds. The blacks don't want integration! Then, the logic has gone full cycle: blacks rejected; blacks become difficult; whites retreat; blacks further rejected. That is the simplest

syllogism. The more highly developed logic goes this way: the blacks are forced into cultural insularity; while insulated, they are treated unequally. This insularity and unequal treatment breed a sub-culture. The sub-culture is so repulsive that further insularity is encouraged. Then the young blacks add to the logic by averring that this is what they want, a world independent of "whitey."

In addition, the public schools, with their proximity to homogenized neighborhoods, serve further to galvanize the sub-culture. They are not only separate still, but with such large numbers in the cities centers, they are massive production stations for countless blacks who approach college entrance and the job market with blinding deficits. All of this makes discrimination look fair and honest.

Observe how much weight falls on the schools in this whole process. They have the power absolute over the pace of change. When schools--beginning with colleges that prepare public school people--make a commitment to a common national destiny, it can be stopped no more than one can sneak daybreak past a healthy rooster.

Schools are dynamic, even when they appear to be static. Students are learning something. And if this dynamism is not at the service of an inclusive society, working through the agony and the conundrum of integration. The same schools will become agents of rigid separatism. And the problem we have today will simply compound itself.

No man, no administrator, should take it upon himself to throw himself across the path of history, impede the most crucial social development since the drafting of the American Constitution and stop civilization at a dead halt on the issue of race. Contrariwise, every president, every principal, every superintendent, every dean, should see this in its broad historical context and ask himself every night in which direction did he push the human family that day.

Finally, a failure to commit ourselves to a cultural pluralism--everyone doing his own thing--within a larger goal of a national economic, political and intellectual community is tantamount to a denial of the best that we know and believe. When we are standing on moral and intellectual tiptoe, we do believe that the veneer of race and culture is thin indeed. The wisest among us have warned us from age to age that God has made of one blood all nations of the earth. From the days of Ruth and Boaz we have felt the guilt of racism as the scourge of mankind.

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But we know and believe more than that. We have a wisdom knowledge that we are here playing with the noblest experiment man has attempted, a democracy that concedes nothing to a man on the basis of blood, wealth or caste, but that is ruled by those ruled. It has weathered many a storm and yet imperfectly it persists.

When we began, some wanted a plutocracy requiring the president and the senators to have money. We shook that off. Then we had to stop Daniel Webster from forcing religious training on the poor white orphans of the Stephen Girard School. Later we had to shake off the prerogative of the states to secede at will, nullification and interposition. We did. Later we had to protect the people against runaway monopolies and cartels. Then we had to protect education from going high-brow by establishing the Land-Grant schools. Then we had to preserve the right of Labor to organize and to bargain collectively. Democracy perfecting itself all the while. Later women were given the franchise and now they have been in the Cabinet and in the Senate.

When her ships were bombed at sea, her far-flung bastions of defense were crumbled and her flag humiliated, she blanketed the skies with winged vengeance and brought her enemies to disgrace.

Why should such national self-determination flounder as in facing up to the last democratic challenge?

Some of us have a hunch that its basic premise that the powers of the state derive from the people is well founded on the idea that man is endowed by God with unalienable rights.

Some of us believe that in the long run, this is the basis of our hope. No matter how misguided politicians may be at any given moment in thinking that rights belong to the state to be spoon-fed to the people, we are haunted by the noble premise of the Founding Fathers, not the divine right of kings, but the divine rights of every dirt farmer, every truck driver, every little black boy that presses his nose against a cold tenement window while we sit here tonight. All of the paraphernalia of our government, our mighty fleet, our atomic arsenal, our planes that prowl the silent skies, all of this is for the sake of preserving the notion that the state has no power except that delegated by its citizens. And the citizens are endowed by their Creator. And He created us all.

It has taken a while to make this principle come alive. Yes it must. And when it does, unborn generations will rise up and call us blessed.